

Medicine Moves West*

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I AM happy to greet you today on behalf of the California Medical Association and its 14,000 members. It is now just over a hundred years since our Association was founded. We have always been interested in medical libraries and for a number of years have actively supported this important work, and no one has ever questioned this item in our annual budget.

I have been asked to say a few words on the dramatic story of the westward movement of medicine to California. That includes, of course, medical schools and libraries, for the two are the handmaidens of medicine.

Before the white man came to California this land was inhabited, for longer years than we know about, by numerous tribes of Indians. You are all familiar with the Indian medicine men. While they made good use of local plants and herbs and were reasonably proficient in caring for accidents and wounds, their basis of treatment was a combination of magic and psychotherapy.

While there were undoubtedly medical men who accompanied the voyages of exploration of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in 1542, of Sir Francis Drake in 1579, and Sebastian Vizcaino in 1602, the story of white man's medicine began in 1769 with the establishment of the first outpost at San Diego. This was "The Sacred Expedition" commanded by Don Gaspar de Portala and included the spiritual leader, Father Junipero Serra, and his devoted followers. The physician who accompanied this expedition was Don Pedro Prat, a graduate of the University of Barcelona. He set up the first primitive hospital in May of 1769, just seven years before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. At that time Doctor Prat was the only white physician in California.

During the next fifty years the medical care in California was under the ministrations of Garrison Surgeons, with the occasional help of surgeons from visiting ships. The mission Padres did their best to supplement these needs but few of them were experienced in medical training. Father Luis Gil y Taboada is recorded as having been "skilled as a physician" and having done Cesarean sections on several Indian women dying in childbirth. We have no record of his medical training.

The Spanish conquistadores who first came to California found it inhabited

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by decadent tribes of Indians who were in the process of disintegration. The impact of the white man upon this poor stock was what could be expected. By the end of the Spanish period in 1822, the death rate among both white and Indians had reached alarming proportions.

The Mexican rule between 1822 and February 2, 1848 when the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo made California a part of the United States of America was an interesting period from many respects. The great westward movement had begun. The spirit of "manifest destiny" was in the air. The new America was pushing out its frontier to include the western shores. Pioneers were coming by land and by sea. Some of these adventurers were physicians. The period of Mexican occupation brought an increasing medical population. Many remained to pioneer their profession in the new land and incidently in not a few cases to marry the beautiful señoritas who often came equipped with large ranchos and numerous cattle.

While the formal accession of California dates to 1848, the Stars and Stripes was raised over the Custom House at Monterey on July 7, 1846 and following several skirmishes, peace with Mexico was arranged by the signing of the Articles of Capitulation at the Rancho Cahuenga by General Andres Pico and Lieut. Colonel John C. Fremont on January 13, 1847.

With the advent of American troops came military surgeons many of whom, upon their discharge, began practice in California. The early towns along the state were fairly well covered by competent military and civilian physicians.

On January 24, 1848, James Wilson Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's Mill at Coloma on the Rio de los Americanos. Although this was not the first time that gold had been found in California, it did prove to be the shot that was soon to be heard around the world. Probably no single event has so changed the course of any community. The population, numbering only a few thousand stretching from San Diego on the south to Oregon on the north, began to grow in amazing proportions. San Francisco changed almost overnight from a quiet pueblo to a sprawling, boistrous city of thousands. Many of the newly founded towns became cities. A few of these have developed into modern cities, such as our capital, Sacramento. Most of the Mother Lode towns have sunk back into solitude, some of them ghost towns, fondly recalling the days of the gold rush with its turbulent and reckless era.

During the decade following the American occupation, the practice of medicine was pretty much chaotic. The Mexican government had exercised some regulation but this consisted mainly in presenting a diploma. Pretty much any kind of a degree sufficed, for the Mexican Alcaldes were frequently ignorant of variations in degrees. Most of the early settlers, if they had any formal education, were called either Doctor or Judge. A number of legitimate physicians were practicing in the state but for each honest doctor there were many imposters, montebanks, and quacks. While the early Californians were

not too anxious to subscribe to formal regulations, the well trained physicians soon began to feel the need for some basis for practice as well as for the mutual exchange of experiences. Medical libraries had not yet come to our state. In several cities, physicians banded together to form medical societies, as early as 1850.

In 1856 the State Society was founded by 76 physicians of the Northern area for the express purpose of "the protection of the public health and to promote the science and art of medicine." Doctor B. F. Keene, formerly of Georgia and at that time serving as State Senator for El Dorado County, was the first president. Except for the war period between 1861 and 1870, the California Medical Association has worked steadily for this same program.

Even from the gold rush days, attempts at public health regulations had been proposed. The State Department of Public Health was founded in 1870. The Medical Practice Act was approved by the Governor on April 3, 1876.

With many well qualified physicians, trained in this country and abroad it was natural that the next step was the foundation of medical schools. The first was begun at San Francisco in 1858 as a part of the University of the Pacific which was located in San Jose. Classes began in May of 1859. Doctor Elias Samuel Cooper, one of the best of early California Surgeons, was the Dean. Two courses of 18 weeks each was necessary for graduation. Of the ten men who entered the first class, two graduated that year. The school had five years of existence.

Doctor Hubert H. Toland, a native of South Carolina, who had practiced in San Francisco since 1852, organized the second medical school and classes were opened in 1864. While members of the faculty of the Medical College of the Pacific were represented in the new school they were never completely integrated into this project. In 1868 the University of California was founded. Almost immediately overtures were made to incorporate the Toland Medical College into the University. Largely through the astute leadership of Daniel Coit Gilman, then President of the University, and later to become the first President of Johns Hopkins, this union was accomplished in 1873. Thus was established the Medical Department of the University of California.

Due to the reluctance of the faculty members of the old Medical College of the Pacific to join the University staff, this group re-opened their now closed institution. In 1882, the school became known as Cooper Medical College in respect to their founder. In 1912 this institution became the Medical Department of Stanford University under the direction of Doctor David Starr Jordan, the President of Stanford. Doctor Jordan was himself a graduate of the Medical School of the University of Indiana.

Several other schools had transient existence in the San Francisco area but soon passed their ephemeral way. Stanford and California today capably meet the needs of the Northern area.

In the Southland, the Medical Department of the University of Southern California was founded by Doctor Joseph P. Widney in 1885. A man of rare attainment, Doctor Widney was graduated from the Toland Medical College in 1866. One of the founders of the University of Southern California, he was for some time the Professor of English literature. He was one of the founders and early President of the Los Angeles County Medical Association. He died in his 97th year in 1938. The school languished for lack of funds and was merged with the University of California as the Los Angeles Department in 1909. This did not work out and in 1914 this department was suspended. The University of Southern California School of Medicine was reestablished in 1928 and is now in full activity.

The College of Medical Evangelists under the auspices of the Seventh Day Adventist Church was begun in 1910. Developed as a means of training medical missionaries for the world wide mission work of the Church, this school has now developed a splendid teaching hospital and has taken its place as one of the distinguished medical training centers of the state.

The newest addition to our medical education was the establishment of the School of Medicine at the University of California at Los Angeles. Graduating its first class in 1955, this medical youngster, with its sights raised to the atomic age, forms a stimulating collaborator to medical discipline in Southern California.

A state may be said to have become matured when a native son reaches the age for graduate training. Platon Vallejo was born at Sonoma in 1841, the son of General Mariano Vallejo, one of the leaders during the Mexican occupation. In 1858 he began his medical studies at Columbia University. He served in the war between the states and received his degree after the war. He was the first native son to win a medical degree. Robert Armistead McLean was born in 1851 at Stockton and was graduated from the Toland Medical College in 1874. He was, thus, the first native son to graduate from a California Medical School. He practiced in San Francisco.

We have said much about medical schools and very little about medical libraries. Each of the five medical schools have their own libraries. The oldest and most distinguished is the Lane Medical Library in San Francisco, associated with Stanford University. Through grants from the founder, Mrs. Levi Cooper Lane, and from Stanford University and by fortuitous gifts from many of the older members of the faculty, it has become the foremost medical library in the state. The Barlow Medical Library, founded by Walter Jarvis Barlow in 1906, was built adjacent to the old Medical School building on North Broadway. This excellent collection was deeded to the Los Angeles County Medical Association in 1934, and since has been maintained by the Association. The Library Committee has planned well for the future. This has become one of the distinguished county medical libraries in the nation. As a service to

members of the California Medical Association living outside metropolitan areas, the State Association actively assists both of these libraries. By this means the physicians of our state, even those who live in remote areas, have the privilege of package service from these fine institutions.

Medical publications are the great communications system of medical practice. Without them we would stand alone. It was just over a hundred years ago that the first medical periodical was published in California, the *San Francisco Medical Journal*, in January, 1856. It was a fine start but unfortunately this venture lasted for only one issue, Volume 1, Number 1. It is today a rarity and only a photostat copy remains in the state. Two other short lived journals appeared in 1857 and 1858. The *Pacific Medical and Surgical Journal* proved to be of sturdier stuff and it lived a useful and honorable career until 1917. The *Transactions of the Medical Society of California* appeared in 1873 as the official journal. In 1901 the name was changed to *The California State Journal of Medicine* and was published monthly. Two subsequent name changes have occurred and *California Medicine* has become the sturdy child of its more ephemeral forebears.

In discussing publications, I must mention two small volumes. One was written by a physician and the other by a physician's wife. So important are their contributions to our knowledge of early California that both are listed in the "Zamorano Eighty," the collection of 80 most significant books on California.

California As It Is and As It May Be was written by Felix Paul Wierzbicki, M.D. and published in San Francisco in 1849. It was the first book, written in English, to be printed in this state. It is a factual description of California both with respect to its agricultural possibilities and its mining activities. The author was a Polish exile who came to America and studied medicine "somewhere in Connecticut." His love of freedom caused him to leave his practice in Providence, Rhode Island and join the California Volunteers who came around the Horn to San Francisco, landing in 1847. Being mustered out of the service, Doctor Wierzbicki traveled extensively about the state and with the onset of the gold rush tried his hand at mining. Returning to San Francisco, he settled down to practice and became an honored member of the profession. The first medical history of this area was written by this scholarly gentleman.

The other little volume, *The Shirley Letters*, were written by the wife of Doctor Fayette Clappe between 1851 and 1852 to her sister in New England. They form a priceless contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the early mad days of the gold rush.

This is a thumbnail sketch of the humble beginnings of medicine in California. From that spring day 187 years ago when one physician ministered to the state, our medical army has grown to 19,000 now listed in our official directory. The little sail cloth hut on the shores of San Diego bay has given

way to the great modern hospitals of today. Medicine has moved west and is marching in the vanguard of progress.

We Californians are very proud of our pioneer founders, those Argonauts who came by land and by sea. Many of them arrived in the spirit of high adventure expecting to spend a few months or years, but remained to found an empire. They were strong and rugged men and women. It has been said of them "the cowards never started and the weak fell along the way." The foundations they builded have proved this to be true.

The gold has gone from the hills but each year in the spring time when the California poppies burst into bloom, the hillsides again turn to gold as if in remembrance of our sturdy founders and of the days of old, the days of gold, the days of forty-nine.

In preparing this brief resumé of western medicine, I am indebted to the writings of Doctors Henry Harris and George D. Lyman and to my friends, Carl I. Wheat and Phil Townsend Hanna.